



**Navajo Nation Program for Self Reliance**  
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## News Release

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### **Navajo President Promotes Creativity, Innovation Seeking Employment Opportunities for NNPSR Customers**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., on Wednesday encouraged service providers to seek creative and innovative solutions to stem dependency upon federal assistance.

Speaking at a special orientation hosted by the Navajo Nation Program for Self Reliance, President Shirley expressed appreciation to all those in attendance for being willing to help Navajo families become self-sufficient.

President Shirley explained that before sought political office, he was a social worker and through his work sometimes encountered two- and three-generation welfare families.

“How do we break that cycle to get them to be working and standing on their own?” President Shirley asked. “It’s a big and tremendous challenge and we’ve got to give it everything we’ve got.”

President Shirley said he realizes the frustration service providers feel when they try to help their clients find jobs and find few opportunities on the Navajo Nation.

“The reality of the matter is where are the jobs?” he asked. “That’s our responsibility as elected leadership, we’ve got to do everything we can to create more jobs on Navajo land. It’s going to take a lot of effort, resources and money.”

“I say that you’ve got to be creative as a caseworker, as a social worker, think outside the box, be creative,



*President Joe Shirley, Jr., addresses service providers attending the Navajo Nation Program for Self Reliance’s special orientation held on Jan. 17 at the Navajo Nation Museum in Window Rock, Ariz.*

innovative and inventive,” President Shirley said explaining that many entrepreneurs started their companies small – in the garage or even in an extra bedroom.

“There’s a lot of money to be made in entrepreneurship,” he said, citing rug weaving and silversmithing as activities that have provided an income to many Navajo families.

“Native people are good with their hands, we need to take a serious look at entrepreneurship,” President Shirley said. “Think ‘Famous Amos’ that company started in a garage and is now worth billions of dollars.”

Already, President Shirley said, “I venture to say we have some millionaires as Navajo people. We are doing it on our own – working at home, being innovative, inventive and thinking creatively on the road to independence.”

“There are all kinds of things to teach our people, to become independent,” he said, explaining that one teaching could be saving 10 cents out of every dollar of income. “Coupled with getting a job and budgeting, we have a chance to get back on our feet.”

President Shirley said the Navajo people were not always dependent upon government assistance.

“We were once very independent, very fierce and very proud,” he said. “We can be Diné people as we once were created, it’s all on our shoulders, each of us.”

President Shirley encouraged service providers to “stay the course” and congratulated the Navajo Nation Program for Self Reliance, formerly the Navajo Nation Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program, for

targeting new populations and supporting them in seeking a career path.

Roxanne Gorman, Department Manager III, of the Navajo Nation Program for Self Reliance, said the program is making several major changes in an effort to better serve the customers.

“Our program is promoting the traditional teaching of *T’áá hwó ájít’éego* – which means, ‘It is up to me to live with a purpose and accept responsibility for the decisions I make to have a good life,’ ” Ms. Gorman said.

“Our customers make a decision to apply to our program and are required to make a commitment to comply with our program requirements to begin a career path to becoming self-sufficient within a time-limited period,” she said. “We provide them the guidance and support to focus on their pursuit of a career, but it is their decision and responsibility to make their goal a reality.”

Ms. Gorman said, “We are very proud of our customers and what they have accomplished while on our program. We understand each customer comes with a desire to improve their standard of living by becoming employed with the hope of a better life for themselves and their children.”

“With the rolling out of our new program name, expansion of services and initiative, we extend an invitation to all interested organizations and entities to learn more about our services and to join us to work in a collaborative manner to support each other to serve our clientele,” she said.